UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1802
4 January 1995

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General receives Letter of Peace from representatives of UNESCO, Universitas Albertiana and Ambito Maria Corral; will brief Security Council on peace-keeping, and give press conference, tomorrow.

+ Cease-fire continues to hold in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with exception of Bihac area; Abdic forces block fuel convoy bound for Bangladeshi peace-keepers.

+ United Nations aid team stands by in Moscow, pending approval for travel to Chechen Republic.

+ France, Italy, Malaysia, Pakistan and United States offer naval support for withdrawal of UNOSOM II peace-keepers from Somalia.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was today presented with a "Letter of Peace" by representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Universitas Albertiana and the Ambito Maria Corral, an organization dedicated to promoting intercultural understanding. The Letter espouses tolerance and universal respect for human rights and offers a set of principles on which to build enduring peace. It has so far been signed by eminent personalities from more than 30 countries, including several winners of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Tomorrow morning, the Secretary-General will brief the Security Council on his position paper on peace-keeping -- an update to his 1992 report "An Agenda for Peace". He will then hold a press conference at noon.

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The cease-fire which came into effect in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 1 January continued to hold well today, with the exception of the Bihac area, according to a United Nations spokesman. There was heavy shelling around Velika Kladusa yesterday, and fighting between Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Government forces around Bosanska Krupa.

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The process of delineating cease-fire lines has already begun, and could be completed within the next two weeks, the spokesman continued. Negotiations are currently underway within the regional cease-fire commissions, and meetings were held yesterday in Bihac and Gorazde. Meanwhile, a fuel convoy bound for the Bangladeshi peace-keepers in Bihac passed through territory controlled by the Croatian Serbs today, but was blocked in Velika Kladusa by forces loyal to rebel leader Fikret Abdic.

The spokesman noted that there would be a meeting of troop contributors at Headquarters tomorrow, as additional troops might be needed to implement the cease-fire agreement. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has an authorized strength of 45,000 troops, but only has 38,500 deployed at present.

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A United Nations aid team is currently waiting for a "green light" to travel to the Chechen Republic, according to a spokesman for the Organization. International staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are standing by in Moscow, and expect to receive visas for travel to the area tomorrow.

The spokesman recalled that the Secretary-General had last week approved a Russian request for assistance in dealing with internally displaced persons in the Chechen Republic. The UNHCR has been in touch with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) regarding the estimates of the number of people in need of humanitarian relief. The ICRC already has three logistical bases for relief supplies around Grozny.

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Five countries -- France, Italy, Malaysia, Pakistan and the United States -- have offered naval support for the withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), a spokesman for the Organization announced today. He anticipated that the remaining 8,000 peace-keepers would have left the country by mid-March.

The spokesman noted that the Secretary-General's Special Representative, James Victor Gbeho, would stay on in Somalia to continue his efforts to promote national reconciliation. The Special Representative is currently in Nairobi for a meeting of the Intergovernmental Agency for Drought and Development (IGAD).

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